

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4359

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 8263

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ECON, UR

SUBJECT: RUMORS OF FOOD SHORTAGES

REF: (A) LENINGRAD 784, (B) MUNICH 1157, (C) MOSCOW 7623

1. NEWSWEEK CORRESPONDENT FRIENDLY QUESTIONED LE FIGARO CORRESPONDENT ABOUT BASIS FOR LATTER'S STORY ON DISTURBANCES OVER FOOD SHORTAGES IN ROSTOV, KIEV AND RIGA. ACCORDING TO FRIENDLY, INCIDENT IN ROSTOV INVOLVED SMALL GROUP OF SHOPPERS WHO OVERTURNED TABLE DISPLAYING ROTTEN POTATOES. FIGARO'S REPORT ON RIGA SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN BASED ON RUMOR OF SLOWDOWN BY DOCK WORKERS (MOSCOW 7623). WE DO NOT KNOW BASIS FOR REPORT OF PROBLEMS IN KIEV, BUT EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO WERE IN KIEV WEEKEND OF MAY 16 REPORTED THAT SUPPLY OF FOOD SEEMED ADEQUATE -- ALTHOUGH KIEV RESTAURANTS WERE OPERATING ON BASIS OF TWO "FISH DAYS" (I.E. NO RED MEAT) EACH WEEK.

2. BRITISH EMBASSY ALSO CHECKED WITH LE FIGARO CORRESPONDENT AND CAME AWAY SKEPTICAL ABOUT VERACITY OF HIS REPORT.

3. ON OTHER HAND, RUMORS OF DISTURBANCES CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE. WE RECENTLY HEARD OF "SERIOUS DISTURBANCES" IN SEVERAL (UNSPECIFIED) LENINGRAD FACTORIES STEMMING FROM
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SHORTAGES OF MEAT. WE ALSO HEARD OF PROBLEM IN MINSK.

4. AG ATTACHE'S SURVEY OF MOSCOW AREA IN MID-MAY (FAS REPORT SS 6014 OF MAY 29) DID NOT DISCLOSE UNUSUAL SHORTAGES. AVAILABILITY OF BASIC FOOD PRODUCTS GENERALLY FOLLOWED PAST SEASONAL TRENDS. MEAT SUPPLIES, PRIMARILY BEEF, APPEARED TO BE ADEQUATE. FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SUPPLIES WERE LOWER THAN DURING PREVIOUS 30-DAY PERIOD; NO CABBAGE OR ONIONS WERE OBSERVED IN STATE STORES -- AND THEREFORE WERE RELATIVELY HIGHLY PRICED IN COLLECTIVE MARKETS. DAIRY PRODUCTS, EGGS, BREAD PRODUCTS AND POTATOES WERE PLENTIFUL AND OF GOOD QUALITY.

5. WE WILL REPORT FULLY AS FURTHER INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.
STOESSEL

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